

ABSTRACT

SOCIAL WORK

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A COMPARISON OF ATTITUDES TOWARD DIVORCE FOR BLACK ADULTS REARED IN INTACT VERSUS NONINTACT FAMILIES OF ORIGIN

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This study examined the attitudes toward divorce of Black graduate students from intact and nonintact families of origin.

The study hypotheses predicted that Black adults from nonintact families of origin would hold more positive attitudes toward divorce than Black adults from intact families of origin and that gender would significantly mediate the relationship between attitude toward divorce and family of origin type.

A nonprobability convenience sampling procedure was used and questionnaires were administered to 50 Black graduate students to assess attitude toward divorce, family of origin type and other descriptive information.

The researcher found that Black adults from nonintact households did not hold significantly more positive attitudes toward divorce than Black adults from intact families of origin, but gender did significantly mediate the relationship between family of origin type and attitude toward divorce.

The conclusions drawn from this study suggest that investigations using independent variables other than family of origin type and those that investigate the relationship between attitude toward divorce and family of origin type, solely for Black men would be the most helpful in providing new information to help explain the prevalence of divorce in the African American community.

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ATTITUDES TOWARD DIVORCE FOR
BLACK ADULTS REARED IN INTACT VERSUS
NONINTACT FAMILIES OF ORIGIN

A THESIS

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BY

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION & STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The divorce rate in the United States has not always been as high as it is today. In the 1950's, divorce was not a common occurrence nor had it reached a general level of acceptability in society.¹ In the year 1965 there were 2.5 persons divorced in every population of 1,000 individuals.² By 1976 the divorce rate had risen to 5.0 out of every population of 1,000 and in the years 1979 & 1981 it reached an all time high of 5.3 divorced individuals per population of 1,000.³ Figures from 1990 show that there were 4.7 people out of every 1,000 who became divorced. As one can see the divorce rate has actually dropped in recent years, but these figures may be misleading. Even though there were only 4.7 people divorced in 1990 for every population of 1,000 persons, statistics still predict that anywhere from one half to two-thirds of all recent marriages will eventually end in divorce.⁴ This prediction can be compared with the 1960 forecast showing that one out of every three marriages would eventually end in divorce and the 1980 estimate that predicted one of every two marriages would someday end in divorce.⁵

¹ Jim Conway, Adult Children of Legal or Emotional Divorce (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990).

² Barbara Kantrowitz, "Breaking the Divorce Cycle," Newsweek Magazine, 13 January 1992, 48-53.

³ Barbara Kantrowitz, 48-53.

⁴ Gay C. Kitson & Leslie A. Morgan, "The Multiple Consequences of Divorce: A Decade Review," Journal of Marriage and the Family 52 (1990): 913-924.

⁵ Jim Conway

Thus, although the number of people getting divorced per year is no longer rising, the total predicted number of eventual divorces continues to rise.

When examining the state of divorce in the African American population, we see that in 1990, for every 100 Black marriages there were 28.2 divorces, as compared with 13 divorces for every 100 White marriages.⁶ This represents a 455% increase for Blacks and a 403% increase for Whites since 1960. At least one author has predicted that if present trends continue, 2/3's of all Black marriages will end in divorce and 1/2 of all White marriages.⁷ One interesting fact about dissolution in the Black population is that first marriages are more likely to end in divorce for Blacks than are second marriages, while the reverse is true for the White American population.⁸

Unlike the divorces our country has seen in the past, many of today's dissolutions are second or third generation divorces. "Andrew Cherlin ... coauthor of *Divided Families* notes children born during the 1930s Depression-when the divorce rate soared-grew up with a powerful resistance to breaking up; divorce was relatively uncommon in the 1950s."⁹ In other words, the rise in parental divorce in the 1930s was not associated with an increased prevalence of divorce among the adult children of divorce, as it appears to be today. Several studies

⁶ Lynda Dickson, "The Future of Marriage and Family in Black America," Journal of Black Studies 23 (1993): 472-491.

⁷ Lynda Dickson, 472-491.

⁸ Jay D. Teachman, "First and Second Marital Dissolution: a Decomposition Exercise for Whites and Blacks," Sociological Quarterly 27 (1986): 571-590.

⁹ Barbara Kantrowitz, 52.

have cited the increased prevalence of children from divorced families to become divorced themselves.¹⁰

The establishment of a cyclical pattern of divorce is significant in light of the research that continues to show that there are many negative impacts that divorce can exhibit on individuals, their children and our society. According to research done on the multiple consequences of divorce by Gay Kitson and Leslie Morgan there are a number of impacts such as health consequences, economic adjustments, and legal issues that the individuals involved in the divorce often face. The impacts of divorce on society are typically felt indirectly as persons and institutions interact with those whom it effects. As for the children of divorce, they are arguably the ones who are affected the most by parental divorce. Much information has been written on the effect that divorce can have on the psychological and emotional development of children and adolescents but our concerns are with how it effects adults and their attitudes toward divorce. If parental divorce has a negative effect on one's adult attitude toward divorce, it seems quite reasonable that this negative effect could play an important role if one is ever faced with a future decision concerning annulment. What is being suggested is that the more frequent occurrence of divorce in adults from nonintact

¹⁰ Alan Booth & John Edwards, "Transmission of Marital and Family Quality over the Generations: The effects of Parental Divorce and Unhappiness," Journal of Divorce 13 (1990) : 41-58; Norval D. Glenn & Kathryn Kramer, "The Marriages and Divorces of the Children of Divorce," Journal of Marriage and the Family 49 (1987) : 811-825; Ellen F. Greenberg & Robert Nay, "Intergenerational Transmission of Marital Instability Reconsidered," Journal of Marriage and the Family 44 (1982) : 335-347; Verna M. Keith & Barbara Finlay, "The Impact of Parental Divorce on Children's Educational Attainment," Journal of Marriage and the Family 50 (1988) : 797-809; Sara McLanahan & Larry Bumpass, "Intergenerational consequences of Family Disruption," American Journal of Sociology 94 (1988) : 873-901; Charles W. Mueller & Hallowell Pope, "Marital Instability: A Study of its Transmission Between Generations," Journal of Social Issues 32 (1976) : 83-93; Hallowell Pope & Charles W. Mueller, "The Intergenerational Transmission of Marital Instability: Comparisons by Race and Sex," Journal of Social Issues 32 (1976) : 49-67.

families of origin may be attributed in part to the attitude toward divorce that adult children from nonintact families tend to acquire.

The problem of concern is that of the high number of divorces amongst the adult children of divorce, and the even higher rate amongst African Americans.¹¹ Although many studies point to the fact that adult children of divorce are more likely to divorce than those from intact households;¹² little research has been done to investigate the variables that may contribute to this phenomenon. One relationship that needs more extensive investigative research is that between attitudes toward divorce and one's family of origin. In attempting to understand the relationship between these two variables, only a small number of studies have investigated them amongst the general population, and an even smaller number have investigated them solely among the Black or Black graduate student population. The question that is being asked is do Black adult children of divorce possess significantly more positive attitudes toward divorce, than those from intact families of origin?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to compare attitudes toward divorce for Black graduate students from intact and nonintact families of origin, with special emphasis being placed upon whether the nonintact group has significantly more positive attitudes toward divorce.

¹¹ R.J. Taylor and others, "Developments in Research on Black Families: A Decade Review," Journal of Marriage and the Family 52 (1990): 993-1014.

¹² Alan Booth & John Edwards, 41-58; Norval D. Glenn & Kathryn Kramer, 811-825.

Significance of the Study

This particular study is attempting to help extend the current body of literature that exists on the relationship between attitudes toward divorce and family of origin type for African Americans generally, Black graduate students specifically, the larger population implicatively.

As stated earlier, there is a small yet generally conclusive body of studies that show adults from nonintact families typically have more positive attitudes toward divorce than those adults from intact families.¹³ However, no known published studies have examined this relationship for the Black or African American graduate student population.

The theoretical significance of this research rests in the fact that little to no published research exists on the population. It is hoped that the knowledge created from the study will provide new data on the association between attitudes toward divorce and family of origin for African Americans. The cognitive learning theory approach to explain the hypothesis of this research is one that has not been previously used with these particular dependent and independent variables.

The practical significance of this research rests in the implications it might have for both the Black and general populations in respect to counseling services for students, and social work practice with children and adults who are experiencing or have experienced divorce in their family of origin. Increased availability of counseling services for students whose parents have divorced and feel that they have issues concerning the divorce that need addressing, is one area

¹³ Marilyn Coleman & Lawrence H. Ganong, "Effect of Family Structure on Family Attitudes and Expectations," *Family Relations* 33 425-432; Ellen F. Greenberg & Robert Nay, 335-347; Frederick G. Rozendal & Jo M. Wells, "Use of the Semantic Differential to Evaluate Long-Term Effects of Loss of Parent on concepts of Family," *The Journal of Genetic Psychology* 143 (1983) : 269-278.

where knowledge from this study could have practical significance. In social work practice with children and adults who experience divorce in their family of origin, the effects of the divorce on subsequent attitudes may prove to be worthy of more serious exploration not just solely for assessing the presenting problem, but also for addressing its future impacts. If nothing else is gained but a new awareness or an increased understanding that students, children, and adults may have issues from their parents' divorce that affect their attitudes towards divorce and relationships, then this information will have had some practical significance.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature that exists on adult children of divorce, gives fairly extensive evidence from researchers that divorce is more prevalent among adults from divorced families of origin.¹ "No studies contradict this finding or suggest that the increased incidence of divorce has reduced the intergenerational inheritance of divorce proneness."²

As to why this relationship between parental divorce and higher rates of divorce for their adult children exists, little is known. In research undertaken to examine the impact of divorce on a child's educational attainment, marital timing and likelihood of divorce³, it was hypothesized that parental divorce typically decreases the economic and social resources available to the child and this is what leads these adult children to greater probabilities of divorce as well as differences in educational attainment, marital timing, and marital probability. The results

¹ Alan Booth & John Edwards, "Transmission of Marital and Family Quality over the Generations: The effects of Parental Divorce and Unhappiness," Journal of Divorce 13 (1990) : 41-58; Norval D. Glenn & Kathryn Kramer, "The Marriages and Divorces of the Children of Divorce," Journal of Marriage and the Family 49 (1987) : 811-825; Ellen F. Greenberg & Robert Nay, "Intergenerational Transmission of Marital Instability Reconsidered," Journal of Marriage and the Family 44 (1982) : 335-347; Verna M. Keith & Barbara Finlay, "The Impact of Parental Divorce on Children's Educational Attainment," Journal of Marriage and the Family 50 (1988) : 797-809; Sara McLanahan & Larry Bumpass, "Intergenerational consequences of Family Disruption," American Journal of Sociology 94 (1988) : 873-901; Charles W. Mueller & Hallowell Pope, "Marital Instability: A Study of its Transmission Between Generations," Journal of Social Issues 32 (1977) : 83-93; Hallowell Pope & Charles W. Mueller, "The Intergenerational Transmission of Marital Instability: Comparisons by Race and Sex," Journal of Social Issues 32 (1976) : 49-67.

² Lynn K. White, "Determinants of Divorce: A Review of Research in the Eighties," Journal of Marriage and the Family 52 (1990) : 906.

³ Verna M. Keith & Barbara Finlay, 797-809.

found some evidence that divorce in one's family of origin lowers educational attainment, age of first marriage, and likelihood of marital success. Women from divorced families of origin had a higher probability of being divorced, and men from divorced families of origin showed higher probabilities of divorce only if they were from lower social class backgrounds. The data of 10,659 participants came from the National Opinion Research Corp's General Social Surveys. Control variables used in the study were respondent's age, race, and mother's education.

Another possible explanation behind the greater incidence of divorce for those from divorced families of origin is that of mate selection. In a 1977 study on the intergenerational transmission of divorce (Mueller & Pope 1977),⁴ the possibility of mate selection serving as an intervening variable between parent and child intergenerational marriage troubles was explored. The results found that women from intact homes were typically older, better educated, less often pregnant at time of marriage, and marry higher-status males who have never married. The relationship occurred only for females who came from homes with one or more sibling. When controls were entered for certain high-risk attributes such as limited education- marriages, the relationship was lessened in a meaningful way. The analysis was done using data that was gathered from the 1970 National Fertility Survey. It sampled white noninstitutionalized ever married U. S. females who came from intact or divorced homes. Four main control variables were used in the study and they are socioeconomic status of the parent

⁴ Charles W. Mueller & Hallowell Pope, 83-93.

family, rural-urban residence when the child was growing up, number of siblings, and religious affiliation.

"While many adult children of divorce report successful marriages and happy lives, the emotional wounds run deep and time does not always heal."⁵ Many times divorce can remain a central issue throughout the life of the adult child of divorce, which only underscores the importance of addressing its impacts before adulthood.

In research that was done on the Psychological Well-being of Adult Children of Divorce,⁶ results indicated that parental divorce has a slightly stronger psychological effect for males than for females. Psychological well being was measured on eight different dimensions using sample of 1500 white adults ages 18-48. These eight dimensions are happiness, health, excitement in life, satisfaction from health, satisfaction from residential community, satisfaction from leisure activities, satisfaction from friendship, satisfaction from family life. Even though results were more pervasive for males than females, both sexes scored consistently negative on seven of the eight coefficients. Only one negative coefficient (happiness) was significant for the men, but five coefficients were significant for the women. General social surveys taken from 1973 through 1982 that were conducted by the National Opinion Research Center were used in the analysis. Control variables used included race, age, father's occupational prestige, father's years of school completed, mother's years of school completed, size of

⁵ Barbara Kantrowitz, "Breaking the Divorce Cycle," Newsweek Magazine, 13 January 1992, 53.

⁶ Norval D. Glenn & Kathryn Kramer, "The Marriages and Divorces of the Children of Divorce," Journal of Marriage and the Family 49 (1987) : 811-825

community at age 16, number of siblings, religion, and whether mother worked outside of home by age 6.

In a 1991 study entitled "Consequences of Parental Divorce and Marital Unhappiness for Adult Well-Being"⁷ a national sample of adults who had experienced divorce in their families of origin were polled and compared with those from intact families on measures of psychological, social, and marital well-being. Results found that those from intact backgrounds who described their parents as unhappily married had lower levels of well being than those that described their parents as happily married. Persons who described their parents' divorce as low stress differed minimally from those reared in happily intact households. Those persons who had the lowest levels of well being were those persons who experienced a decline in parental relations following the divorce and those whose parents had been through numerous divorces. The data for the analysis came from a telephone study of marital instability conducted by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Some theorist say that the adults who come from divorced families of origin grow up understanding divorce to be an acceptable choice for an unfulfilling marriage, while others feel that the stress children experience from parental divorce makes them more likely to view marital disruption negatively and enter adulthood as strong believers in the ideal that marriage should be a lifelong commitment. Even though research studies fail to unanimously conclude the exact same result, they have generally found that parental divorce is a variable that can

⁷ Paul R. Amato & Alan Booth, "Consequences of Parental Divorce and Marital Unhappiness for Adult Well-being," Social Forces 69 (1991a): 895-914.

be used to predict liberal attitudes toward divorce in adulthood. No studies have uncovered a contrary pattern.⁸

In their research on the marriages and divorces of the children of divorce Norval Glenn and Kathryn Kramer⁹ distinguished between seven explanatory theories on the increased likelihood of divorce among those adults from nonintact families of origin. An understanding of Kramer and Glenn's seven explanatory theories is useful because they are most commonly used as hypotheses for investigative and explanatory studies on divorce amongst adults from nonintact families of origin. They are as follows: the absence-of-modeling-of-spouse-roles explanation, the inadequate-social-control explanation, the inappropriate-modeling-of-spouse-roles explanation, the greater-willingness-to-resort-to-divorce explanation, the earlier-age-at-marriage explanation, the lower-educational-attainment explanation, and the lower-commitment-to-marriage explanation.

The absence-of-modeling-of-spouse-roles explanation says that growing up without both parents present leaves the person without the chance for ongoing observation of the performance of the roles of the husband and wife. Due to this lack of opportunity the child never is educated on appropriate behavior for husband and a wife.¹⁰

The inadequate-social-control explanation says that the lack of adequate adult control and parental support after marriage causes difficulties in the

⁸ Paul R. Amato & Alan Booth, "The Consequences of Divorce for Attitudes Toward Divorce and Gender Roles," *Journal of Family Issues* 12 (1991b): 306-322.

⁹ Norval D. Glenn & Kathryn Kramer, 811-825.

¹⁰ Hallowell Pope & Charles W. Mueller, 49-67.

marriages of persons whose late childhood or adolescence was in a one parent or no parent household.¹¹

The inappropriate-modeling-of-spouse-roles explanation is one that understands the modeling of spouse roles observed by the children of divorce to be more negative than positive, and thus if imitated in the marriages of the adult children, the probable consequence is that the adult child will also experience problems.¹²

The greater willingness-to-resort-to-divorce explanation feels that divorce tends to be more of a conjurable option to the children of divorce than to those from intact families.¹³ The greater willingness-to-resort-to-divorce explanation is the theory that is most closely associated to this research study.

The earlier-age-at-marriage explanation uses the earlier than average age at which adult children of divorce marry¹⁴ to explain the higher than normal divorce rate among adult children of divorce. This theory is based on research statistics that say persons who marry at a young age are more likely to divorce than older persons who marry.

The lower-educational attainment explanation is based on separate research by Sheila Krein and Sara McLanahan¹⁵ that correlates single parenting with a

¹¹ Hallowell Pope & Charles W. Mueller, 49-67.

¹² Hallowell Pope & Charles W. Mueller, 49-67.

¹³ Ellen F. Greenberg & Robert Nay, 335-347.

¹⁴ Larry L. Bumpass & James A. Sweet, "Differentials in Marital Instability: 1970," American Sociological Review 37 (1972) : 85-94; Norval D. Glenn & Michael Supanic, "The Social and Demographic Correlates of Divorce and Separation in the United States: An Update and Reconsideration," Journal of Marriage and the Family 46 (1984) : 563-576.

¹⁵ Norval D. Glenn & Kathryn Kramer, 811-825.

lessened degree of educational attainment. It is also based on research findings that relate educational level with the percentage of divorced or separated persons. Thus this explanation makes the connection that parental divorce might indirectly affect the prevalence of divorce among the adult children of divorce through education.¹⁶

The lower-commitment-to-marriage explanation is that adult children of divorce, although not typically more reluctant to marry, have greater difficulty making a strong commitment inside marriage. Because their experiences have taught them that marriage is an often delicate, the adult children of divorce may lower their expectations and be unwilling to risk committing themselves in ways that are usually necessary to sustain a good marriage.¹⁷

Only a small number of studies have solely addressed the relationship between attitudes toward divorce and one's family of origin, and an even smaller number have done so using a graduate student population. Research studies such as Coleman and Ganong, 1984; Greenberg & Nay 1982; Rozendal & Wells, 1983 have looked into this relationship using college students and others Amato, 1991; Amato, 1988; & Kulka and Weingarten, 1979; have investigated this relationship for all adults.

In a 1991 study by Paul Amato and Alan Booth entitled "The Consequences of Divorce for Attitudes Toward Divorce and Gender Roles," it was found that individuals who experienced parental divorce as children held more positive attitudes toward divorce as adults when compared with adults from intact families

¹⁶ Norval D. Glenn & Kathryn Kramer, 811-825.

¹⁷ Norval D. Glenn & Kathryn Kramer, 811-825.

of origin that were perceived as happy or somewhat happy. However, this same relationship did not exist when adults from divorced families of origin were compared with adults from unhappily intact families of origin; as individuals who recalled their parents' marriage as unhappy were significantly more likely to hold favorable views toward divorce. In the study, attitude scale scores were used as dependent variables and Father's education, Mother's education, Mother's employment status, respondent's age, respondent's sex, and respondent's ethnicity were used as control variables.

In a 1982 study by Ellen Greenberg and W. Robert Nay entitled "The Intergenerational Transmission of Marital Instability Reconsidered," questionnaires were administered, and vignettes were shown to 397 college students to uncover marriage related attitudes, dating experience, and conflict resolution skills of those from intact and non-intact families of origin. This study found that college students whose parents had separated/divorced held significantly more favorable attitudes toward divorce, when compared with those of intact and parent deceased families. The sample consisted of 191 men and 206 women whose mean age was 18.4 years.

A 1992 investigation by Katherine Trent and Scott J. South termed "Sociodemographic Status, Parental Background, Childhood Family Structure, and Attitudes Toward Family Formation," found that nontraditional family arrangements in childhood tended to liberalize attitudes toward divorce. This study used 13,017 adults from the National Survey of Families and Households to uncover the effects of individual characteristics, parental background, and childhood living arrangements on adults' attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and nonmarital childbearing. In collecting the data, steps were taken to ensure

minority representation similar to U. S. population data. Because rates of marriage, divorce, and premarital pregnancy vary by geographic area, it was used as a control along with the percentage of county population that is urban.

Marilyn Coleman and Lawrence H. Ganong's 1984 study entitled "Effect of Family Structure on Family Attitudes and Expectations," explored the effects of family structure and family integration on the attitudes of high school and college students attitudes toward marriage, marriage roles, and divorce. The results of the study found that persons from mother/stepfather and mother-only families showed significantly more positive attitudes toward divorce than those from intact families. However, attitudes toward divorce of persons from stepmother-father and father-only households were not significantly different than those from intact households. Participants in this study numbered 531 males and 660 females ranging in age from 18-22, with a median age of 18. Dependent variables were attitudes toward marriage, marriage role expectations, and divorce. Independent variables were family integration, family structure, and sex.

In a 1988 study by Paul Amato entitled "Parental Divorce and Attitudes toward Marriage and Family Life," a comparison of attitudes toward issues surrounding marriage and family life was conducted for Australians from divorced families of origin and intact families of origin. This survey found that adults from divorced families of origin were no more or less likely than other respondents to be in favor of divorce. The data for the report came from a study conducted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies in 1981-1982. It used a random sample of male and female Australian respondents ages 18-34. The control variables used in the study were age, sex, father and mother's years of education, father's and mother's country of birth, father and mother's religion, father and mother's church

attendance, and number of full biological brothers and sisters. The dependent variable was attitudes toward marriage and family life.

In the journal article "Use of the Semantic Differential to Evaluate Long-term effects of loss of parent on Concepts of Family,"¹⁸ concepts of "mother," "father," "marriage," "family," "divorce," and "I myself" were rated by 24 parent-loss and 24 parent-intact college students. The study found that those adults who had experienced parent-loss rated traditional family concepts ("mother," "father," "marriage," "family") less favorably and divorce more favorably than those from parent-intact families. This study also found that men rated "divorce" less positively than women, but that this relationship was unrelated to one's family of origin type.

"The Long-term Effects of Parental Divorce in Childhood on Adult Adjustment,"¹⁹ explored the relationship between experiencing a parental divorce or separation prior to age 16, and several measures of adult adjustment and psychological functioning. The results found that married men from divorced backgrounds were more likely than those from intact homes to agree that divorce is often the best solution for unresolvable marriage problems, but the same effect was not found in women. The study used the control variables of social class of parental home, location of upbringing, and religious affiliation.

"Changing Attitudes toward Separation and Divorce: Causes and Consequences,"²⁰ explored separation and divorce attitudes and attitude change,

¹⁸ Frederick G. Rozendal & Jo M. Wells, "Use of the Semantic Differential to Evaluate Long-Term Effects of Loss of Parent on concepts of Family," The Journal of Genetic Psychology 143 (1983) : 269-278.

¹⁹ Richard A. Kulka & Helen Weingarten, "The Long-Term Effects of Parental Divorce in Childhood on Adult Adjustment," Journal of Social Issues 35 (1979) : 50-78.

using intergenerational data from mothers and children. This study found that attitudes toward divorce are shown to have little influence on subsequent marital dissolution, but one's own divorce was shown to greatly influence attitudes toward divorce. The data used in the analysis came from a sample of first, second, and fourth born white children from the July 1961 birth records of the Detroit metro area. The three main dependent variables in the study were mother's attitudes in several different years, attitudes of the child for one specific year, and the divorce experience of the mother .

In "A Comparison of Children from Divorced and Nondivorced Unhappy Marriages,"²¹ three hypothesis were investigated to determine differences in parent-child relations, dating maturation, and self-evaluations. On most variables tested, children from happy marriages differed significantly than those from unhappy nondivorced or divorced homes. Three thousand college students filled out a questionnaire to obtain the data. In regards to some of the parent-child relationship significances, males had a much more distant relationship with divorced fathers than with unhappy nondivorced fathers. For females, those from divorced backgrounds reported more distance in their relationship with their father than those from unhappy nondivorced families. In regards to dating histories, responses of those from happy marriages were significantly statistically different than those from unhappy marriages. When dating histories were compared for those from divorced and unhappy nondivorced marriages only one of twelve differences was significant. In respect to self-evaluation, respondents from happy

²⁰ Arland Thornton, "Changing Attitudes toward Separation and Divorce: Causes and Consequences," American Journal of Sociology 90 (1985) : 856-872.

²¹ Judson T. Landis, "A Comparison of Children from Divorced and Nondivorced Unhappy Marriages," The Family Life Coordinator 11 (1962) : 61-65.

marriages gave a significantly higher self evaluation on 8 of 12 items. A small percentage of men from divorced homes evaluated their personality as more below average than did the men from unhappy nondivorced marriages.

The effects of parental divorce on dating maturation was also explored as possible impact of parental divorce in the research study entitled "The Impact of Parental Divorce on Courtship."²² This study documents that in its survey of 365 college students, parental divorce increased courtship activity among adult children of divorce. When acrimony was involved, relations with parents worsened, or the custodial parent remained unmarried; courtship activity increases even more. The age at which the divorce occurs showed little impact on the amount or quality of courtship activity. Results for males and females were similar. Control variables used in the study were mother and father's education, religion, gender, and age. All persons 25 and over were eliminated from the sample.

While there is only a small number of studies that have investigated the relationship between attitudes toward divorce and family of origin type, no known studies have addressed that relationship solely amongst the Black or Black graduate student population. The small handful of studies on marriage and family that include measures tapping attitudes toward divorce and responses of African Americans, either lack a significant number of Black respondents, or do not tabulate their data separately for Blacks from intact and nonintact households (e.g. Trent and South, 1992; Coleman & Ganong, 1984). Even though Blacks have a

²² Alan Booth, David B. Brinkerhoff, and Lynn K. White, "The Impact of Parental Divorce on Courtship," Journal of Marriage and the Family 46 (1984): 85-94.

higher rate of divorce than Whites,²³ at least one author's research²⁴ suggests that Blacks may be more disapproving of divorce than Whites.

Several statistics that indicate that marriage and family life amongst the African American population has trends that are somewhat distinct from that of the population as a whole. Thus, in this research on the attitudes toward divorce for Black graduate students from intact and nonintact families of origin, we have reason to suspect the findings will be quite different than those found amongst the White population.

"The Future of Marriage and Family in Black America,"²⁵ chronicles many different aspects of the current state of the Black family. It reveals such facts as African Americans have lower marriage rates, higher divorce and separation rates, and lower remarriage rates than the general population. In 1990 only 39% of all Black women who were between the ages of 30-34 were living with a husband, compared with 65% in 1960. In 1990 the divorce ratio was 28.2 divorces per 100 marriages for Blacks, compared to 13 divorces per 100 marriages for Whites. In regards to remarriage, Only 1 in 8 Blacks eventually remarry as compared to 4 in 7 Whites. The attitudes toward divorce for African Americans is of special interest due to the unique set of circumstances of the population. First, 46% of Black men between the ages of 16 and 62 are not in the labor force.²⁶ Secondly,

²³ R.J. Taylor and others, "Developments in Research on Black Families: A Decade Review," Journal of Marriage and the Family 52 (1990) : 993-1014.

²⁴ Katherine Trent & Scott J. South, "Sociodemographic Status, Parental Background, Childhood Family Structure, and Attitudes Toward Family Formation," Journal of Marriage and the Family 54 (1992) : 427-439.

²⁵ Lynda Dickson, "The Future of Marriage and Family in Black America," Journal of Black Studies 23 (1993) : 472-491.

²⁶ Lynda Dickson, 472-491.

in 1990, 55% of Black children lived with one parent. Thirdly, Black men are outnumbered by Black women by at least 100 for every 78, and among Black men more than 50% are in some type of prison.²⁷ The reality of these conditions could lead one to presume that regardless of family of origin, there is a great possibility that attitudes toward divorce for African Americans will differ significantly from those of the general population in one way or another.

In research that was designed to uncover the degree of intergenerational marital instability in the Black community,²⁸ data from a true sample size of 1,651 urban Blacks living in metropolitan areas in the northern U.S. were analyzed. The results found that the association between instability in one's family of origin was not highly correlated with instability in one's own marriage. The correlation was higher for the middle class and even higher for middle class females who experienced parental divorce at a young age. In general, it was found that instability in one's family of origin, post-parental divorce living arrangements, and the cause of the break-up have a small influence on one's own marital instability.

In a journal article entitled "Implications of the Black Marriage Market for Marital Conflict,"²⁹ it is noted that 37% of Black males and 42% of Black females have been through divorce, as compared to 22% for White males and 24% for White females.³⁰ The authors note three conditions that create increased strain in Black relationships and help to explain the greater incidence of divorce among

²⁷ Lynda Dickson, 472-491.

²⁸ Jarold Heiss, "On the Transmission of Marital Instability in Black Families," American Sociological Review 37 (1972): 82-92.

²⁹ Paul F. Secord & Kenneth Ghee, "Implication of the Black Marriage Market for Marital Conflict," Journal of Family Issues 7 (1986): 21-30.

³⁰ Paul F. Secord & Kenneth Ghee, 21-30.

Blacks. One, there are more educated Black women than men. For every 100 Black women age 20-24 that had a high school diploma only 80 Black men had acquired the same. Two, Black women have a higher occupational status than black men. Occupational status is judged in terms whether the individual holds a professional, technical, managerial position as opposed to clerical or etc. Three, Women are much closer in income to Black men than white women are to white men. The income difference is only 33% between Black men and women, whereas the difference is 60% for White men and women. One interesting finding of the research done by this author was that Black men and women with 1-4 years of college education had higher divorce rates than those Black women and men with a high school education or less. Among the white population the opposite was found to be true.

One research study on the first and second marital dissolutions of Blacks,³¹ investigated the impact of two factors on the marital dissolution rates for Blacks and Whites. Those two factors were the relative distribution of characteristics across a population that influence the probability of divorce and the relative degree that each characteristic raises or lowers the probability of divorce. Data for the analysis came from three rounds of the National Survey of Family Growth. The study found that for Blacks and Whites, age at marriage was a strong predictor of divorce. A slight tendency for women from nonintact homes to divorce was also found. Quite interestingly, there was a lack of predictor variables for second marital dissolutions, especially for Black women. The authors could find no evidence that the factors that influence first time divorces, influenced second time

³¹ Jay D. Teachman, "First and Second Marital Dissolution: a Decomposition Exercise for Whites and Blacks," Sociological Quarterly 27 (1986): 571-590.

divorces. Among African Americans, first marriages were more likely to end in divorce than second marriages, while among White Americans, second marriages were more likely to end in divorce than were first marriages.

One factor that seems to affect one's attitude toward divorce is their perception of marriage. Much of the literature from the 1980's and 1990's suggests that Americans attitudes toward marriage have changed in the last two decades. It seems reasonable that if attitudes toward marriage actually are perceived less positively than they have been in the past, then remaining single as well as getting divorced may also become more attractive than it has been in the past. In "Changing Attitudes toward Marriage and Single Life"³² the authors found that most Americans no longer regard getting married as better than remaining single, and they don't disapprove of those who shy away from marriage. The study also found that even though most persons don't feel as pressured to marry, 90% of those surveyed expect to marry and still value the institution highly. The information was gathered from a probability sample of young adults and their mothers in a 1980 study of American families.

In the research article entitled "Changing Attitudes toward Family Issues in the United States,"³³ three decades of values concerning family life were assessed. The research found that there was a general weakening of the imperative to marry, to remain married, to have children, to restrict intimate relations to marriage, and to maintain separate roles for males and females. The study reported a substantial movement toward more acceptance of divorce between the

³² Arland Thornton & Deborah Freedman, "Changing Attitudes Toward Marriage and Single Life," Family Planning Perspectives 14 (1982): 297-303.

³³ Arland Thornton, "Changing Attitudes toward Family Issues in the United States," Journal of Marriage and the Family 51 (1989): 873-893.

years of 1962 and 1977, but this trend does not extend into the 1977-1980 or 1980-1985 time frames. The survey sample was drawn from the General Social Survey of the National Opinion Research Center, a University of Michigan survey of high school seniors, and a panel study of mothers and children.

In a study entitled "Marital Happiness of Parents and their Children's Attitude to Marriage,"³⁴ it was hypothesized that favorableness of one's attitude to marriage varies with parental happiness in one's family of origin. Wallin writes "If this evaluation [of parents' marriage] is not materially influenced by knowledge of the divorce rate it is still subject to some reality testing in that the child has intimate knowledge of the union of his parents, if of no other adults."³⁵ The findings of this study showed that the happier men conceived their parents' marriage, the more favorable was their attitude toward marriage. The results for women showed that overall they had a more favorable attitude toward marriage than the men. Whereas the attitude toward marriage of men steadily becomes less positive as their perception of their parents' marital happiness decreases, attitudes for women decline and then rise again even as perceptions of parents' marital happiness continues to decline. The survey data came from questionnaires that were administered to 394 women and 215 men in college classes. The median age of the participants was 20.

Theoretical Framework

As has already been written, adult children of divorce have been proven to become more likely to experience divorce. This study uses as its foundation the

³⁴ Paul Wallin, "Marital Happiness of Parents and their Children's Attitude to Marriage," American Sociological Review 19 (1954): 20-23.

³⁵ Paul Wallin, "Marital Happiness of Parents and their Children's Attitude to Marriage," American Sociological Review 19 (1954): 20.

belief that the increased prevalence of divorce among the children of divorce is not solely due to one variable or theory but a combination. Many studies on the subject seem to approach their research on the basis that each possible explanation should only be considered independently.

The theoretical perspective that will be the basis of this research study is grounded in cognitive learning theory, which explains how human beings form their attitudes and beliefs. Cognitive learning theory believes that each person holds a set of mental schemes that act as filters, selectively influencing the information individuals intake, the way they understand it, the degree of importance they attach to it, and how or whether they choose to use it.³⁶

In borrowing from the cognitive-ecological model of human behavior,³⁷ a clearer way of stating cognitive learning theory might be that we come to understand through the general experiences of life, through contacts with other people and specific events that occur. We take all of these experiences and obtain psychological and emotional meaning from them that is sometimes accurate and sometimes inaccurate. We remember this information in a short schematic form and use it to determine what views we will hold and how we are going to behave.

When examining how cognitive learning theory lends itself to the dependent variable (attitudes toward divorce), one must understand that cognitive learning theory says that individuals construct an understanding of what something means based upon their interpretations of their experiences, and the emotional and psychological meaning they attach to them. In other words, behavior of

³⁶ James W. Vander Zanden, Human Development, 5th ed., (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993).

³⁷ Aaron M. Brower & Paula S. Nurius, Social Cognition and Individual Change (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993).

individuals can be explained in terms of the meaning persons derive from their experiences, and the belief system that arises based upon those experiences. Those experiences that are first hand and personal will often have a stronger impact than those that are not. Typically, persons have difficulty discounting or changing information that runs contrary to their personal experiences. Likewise, those experiences that are emotionally and psychologically moving will tend to have a stronger impact than those that are not.

Given that divorce is an emotionally charged event that is a personal experience for those from divorced families of origin, it is likely to have a strong impact on an individual's beliefs and values concerning divorce. Using the aforementioned cognitive learning theory based explanation, the hypothesis of this research study proposes that adults from divorced families of origin tend to acquire significantly more positive attitudes toward divorce than those adults from nondivorced families of origin. This hypothesis derives from two closely associated beliefs. The first is that one's perception of their parents' decision to remain intact or to acquire a divorce as good decision making, versus bad decision making plays the *most significant* role in determining one's adult attitude toward divorce. The second is that the majority of adults from intact and nonintact families of origin come to perceive their parents' intactness or divorce in a positive manner. In other words most adults feel that their parents' decision to remain intact or get a divorce was a good one.

If one has a good understanding of these two beliefs that serve as the foundation of the hypothesis, then one can gain a deeper understanding of the reason why this particular hypothesis, which states adults from nonintact families of origin hold significantly more positive attitudes toward divorce, has been set

forth. Theorists have proposed that adults from divorced families of origin will typically hold more positive attitudes towards divorce,³⁸ and research interviews with children lend support to the theory that the majority of adults accept their parents' divorce as being typically unpleasant but also necessary.³⁹

The control variable that is being used to mediate between the dependent and independent variables is gender. When trying to understand attitudes toward divorce for those from intact and nonintact households, it is important to include gender as a factor because many times men and women hold significantly different values. The cognitive learning theory based explanation used to understand why men and women may have value differences that are more gender than personality specific, is that men and women interpret events using a different intake process. This means that the process women use to absorb and interpret the general experiences of life, specific life events, and contacts with other persons is different than that generally used by men. The suspected difference is in the degree of psychological and emotional meaning that men and women attach to events. For example one might witness an event and derive a meaning from it that is 95% psychological and 5% emotional, while another person may witness the same event and derive a meaning from it that is 60% emotional and 40% psychological, and still a third person may witness the event and not obtain meaning from it at all. Given the presumption that men and women use separate intake processes to arrive at separate meanings from events, it is consistent with cognitive learning theory that they would then acquire different attitudes or values. Because of these

³⁸ Paul R. Amato & Alan Booth, 306-322

³⁹ Paul R. Amato & Alan Booth, 306-322.

presuppositions, it is necessary that gender be used as a control variable to mediate the relationship between attitudes toward divorce and family of origin type.

Based on the previous literature review, conceptual framework, and general purpose of this study, the following research hypotheses are presented.

Statement of Hypotheses

1. Black adults who were reared in nonintact families of origin hold a significantly more positive attitude toward divorce than those Black adults who were reared in intact families of origin.
2. There will be significant gender differences in the relationship between family of origin type and attitudes toward divorce.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Sample

This is a comparative research study was designed to assess the attitudes toward divorce for Black graduate students who were reared in intact households versus those who were reared in nonintact households. The analysis will determine whether a sample of Black graduate students at Clark Atlanta University from nonintact families of origin do or do not hold significantly more positive attitudes toward divorce than those from intact families. In addition to the above, this study will also detect whether there are significant gender differences in the relationship between family of origin type and attitudes toward divorce.

A nonprobability convenience sampling procedure was used to obtain a sample of graduate students from various departments at Clark Atlanta University. The only criteria of eligibility was that the participants were Black and enrolled in a Clark Atlanta University graduate program as either a full or part-time student. The sample size consist of 50 participants, 30 of whom are female and 20 of whom are male. Respondents ages range from 22 to 47 with the mean age being 26.8. Ninety-four percent of the respondents identified themselves as being of African American origin. The other six percent (3) of the persons in the sample were of African origins. Eighty percent (40) of the sample were single and had never been married, 12 percent were married, 6 percent were divorced, and 2 percent listed their marital status as other. The data were collected through structured

questionnaires that were distributed by the researcher and self-administered by the participants. The questionnaire was issued to Black Clark Atlanta University graduate students in classrooms, at University functions, and in the university's graduate dormitory. Participation in the survey was strictly voluntary and the survey cover sheet explained that confidentiality and anonymity would be observed. Questionnaires that were completed in the classroom setting were returned immediately, while those that were completed at University functions or in the private rooms of residents of the graduate dormitory were returned anywhere from 15 minutes to 6 days after issuance. Questionnaires were accompanied by the researcher's introduction and a short explanation of the goals and purposes of the study. The purpose of using the researcher to distribute the questionnaire was to accomplish preliminary tasks. Those tasks were an introduction, a brief statement concerning the purpose and goals of the study, and a promise of confidentiality and anonymity. All of this information was given orally to the respondents and written on the cover sheet of the questionnaire along with additional information and instructions. No time constraints were imposed and all participants were encouraged to complete the questionnaire upon issuance. In most situations, the researcher was either physically present or able to be reached by telephone to answer respondents questions regarding the completion of the survey. The average length of time for completion of the survey was between 7 and 12 minutes.

Measurements

The measurement package that was used contained two main sections. The first section of the measuring instrument was designed to gather several kinds of

demographic information, with the most important information being those questions that pertained to the independent and control variables of family of origin type and gender. Family of origin type was measured with a question that asked the state of one's parents' marriage up until the participant's 18th birthday. Eleven categorical responses were provided and the participant was asked to select one category by placing an X next to the most appropriate answer. Gender was measured through the question "what is your sex?" Respondents marked an X on either the line corresponding to male or the line corresponding to female. The other demographic information was acquired through the use of open and closed ended fill in the blank questions, yes & no questions, and multiple choice questions. None of the inquiries listed in this section were obtained from standardized instruments, but all were created by the researcher.

The second section of this instrument was designed to gather information in regards to the dependent variable of respondent attitudes toward divorce, as well as yield data on the respondents' perceptions of their parents' relationship. The first part of this second section of the measure was created solely by the researcher to obtain the respondents' feelings about the positiveness of their parents' relationship. The second part of this second section of the measure, which was designed to assess each respondent's attitudes toward divorce, was obtained from a modified form of a standardized instrument. That instrument is the Total Divorce Scale as created by Paul Amato and Alan Booth (1991).¹ The Total Divorce Scale was adopted from a previously existing scale that was created by Kitson and

¹ Paul R. Amato & Alan Booth, "Consequences of Divorce for Attitudes Toward Divorce and Gender Roles," Journal of Family Issues 12 (1991b) : 306-322.

Sussman (1982).² The Total Divorce Scale consists of six statements that inquire about general attitudes toward divorce and beliefs about whether it is okay to divorce given different hypothetical scenarios. The participants responded to these statements numerically with a 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5. Five represented strongly disagree, one represented strongly agree, and the numbers inbetween represented the various degrees of agreement/disagreement between the two. For three of the statements, a high numerical response indicated a prodivorce attitude, while for the other three, a low numerical response indicated a more prodivorce attitude.

² Gay C. Kitson & Marvin B. Sussman, "Marital Complaints, Demographic Characteristics, and Symptoms of Mental Distress in Divorce," Journal of Marriage and the Family 44 (1982): 87-101.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

In this research study, descriptive statistics, the one way ANOVA, and the elaboration model (using the Pearson Chi-square) were used to analyze the study variables. An alpha level of .05 was used to determine whether to reject or accept the study hypotheses.

TABLE 1. FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF STUDY VARIABLES
(*N*=50)

VARIABLE	NUMBER	PERCENT
SEX		
MALE	20	40%
FEMALE	30	60%
TOTAL	50	100%
ATTITUDE TOWARD DIVORCE ^a		
LOW	31	62%
MEDIUM	19	38%
TOTAL	50	100%
FAMILY OF ORIGIN TYPE		
NEVER MARRIED	9	18%
MARRIED	23	46%
NOT TOGETHER	14	28%
OTHER	4	8%
TOTAL	50	100%

Attitude toward Divorce:

mean = 18.16

standard deviation = 2.93

^a Low attitude toward divorce scores indicate a more prodivorce sentiment.

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics that show the numbers and percentages of all the study variables, as well as the mean and standard deviation for the attitude toward divorce variable. The average attitude toward divorce score was 18.6, indicating that most of the respondents were not extremely pro or anti- divorce. The standard deviation on attitudes was 2.93.

The actual score results for attitude toward divorce ranged from 13-25. The lower one's attitude toward divorce score, the more positive are one's views on divorce. Persons scoring in the 13-18 range were placed in the low attitude category and persons scoring between 19-25 were placed in the medium attitude category. For attitude toward divorce, 62% of the sample or 31 of the participants had an attitude score that was categorized in the low range, while 38% of the sample which is equivalent to 19 of the 50 persons in the sample, had an attitude score that fell in the medium range.

Twenty respondents or 40% of the sample population indicated that they were male, while 30 respondents which translates into 60% of the sample, indicated that they were female.

Respondent's family of origin type was measured using four categories: never married, married, not together, and other. The never married category for persons whose parents had never married was 18% of the sample or 9 respondents. The married category for persons whose parents were married but not necessarily living together up until the respondents 18th birthday, numbered 23 or 46% of the sample. The not together category for persons whose parents had divorced prior to the respondent's 18th birthday was 28% or 14 of the sample participants. The other category for those persons who did not fit into one of previous three, numbered 4 which figured to be 8% of the sample. This category

is comprised of three persons who had one or both parents die prior to their 18th birthday and one person who did not respond.

TABLE 2. RESULTS OF ANOVA FOR ATTITUDES BY FAMILY OF ORIGIN

VARIABLE	NUMBER	MEAN	SD	SIGNIFICANCE
FAMILY OF ORIGIN TYPE				
NEVER MARRIED	9	17.77	3.15	F=.485
MARRIED	23	17.83	3.08	df=2/43
NOT TOGETHER	14	18.79	3.04	p=.62

Table 2 represents the results of the one way ANOVA for attitude toward divorce by family of origin. The alpha level used to reject or accept the first study hypothesis was .05. The first research hypothesis states: Black adults reared in nonintact families of origin hold a significantly more positive attitude toward divorce than those Black adults who were reared in intact families of origin. Given the results of the ANOVA for attitudes by family of origin, the first research hypothesis was rejected.

The never married category included 9 persons in the sample, had a mean score of 17.77 and a standard deviation of 3.15. The married category numbered 23 participants, had a mean score of 17.83 and a standard deviation of 3.08. The not together category included 14 sample participants, had a mean score of 18.79 and a standard deviation of 3.04. The closely associated means between the three family of origin groups indicates that attitude toward divorce did not significantly vary by family of origin type.

TABLE 3. CROSSTABULATION OF FAMILY OF ORIGIN BY ATTITUDE TOWARD DIVORCE CONTROLLED FOR GENDER

VARIABLE	MEN				X ² VALUE	WOMEN				X ² VALUE
	MARRIED		NOT TOGETHER			MARRIED		NOT TOGETHER		
	N	%	N	%		N	%	N	%	
ATTITUDE ^a					8.676 ^b					1.642
LOW	12	92.3%	3	60%		6	60%	3	33.3%	
MEDIUM	1	7.7%	2	40%		4	40%	6	66.7%	

^a df = 1

^b p ≤ .01 for men

Low attitude toward divorce scores indicate a more prodivorce sentiment.

Table 3 presents the results of the Pearson Chi-square in the form of a crosstabulation of family of origin by attitude toward divorce controlling for gender. The alpha level used to accept or reject the second study hypothesis was .05. The second research hypothesis states: There will be significant gender differences in the relationship between family of origin type and attitudes toward divorce. Based on the outcome of the crosstabulation, the second research hypothesis was accepted. There were statistically significant differences in the relationship between family of origin type and attitudes toward divorce for the men, but not for the women.

Of the men from married families of origin, 12 or 92.3% had a low attitude toward divorce score, and 1 person or 7.7% of these men had an attitude score in the medium range. Of those men from not together families of origin, 3 persons or 60% of the sample had a low attitude toward divorce score, and 2 of these men or 40% had a medium attitude toward divorce score. For women from married families of origin 6 or 60% had a low attitude toward divorce score, and 4 or 40% of these women had medium attitude toward divorce scores. Of those women from not together families of origin, 3 or 33.3 percent of the women had a low

attitude score, while 6 or 66.7% of these women had a medium attitude toward divorce score.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

The high rate of divorce in the African American population, whose population has a disproportionate number of single female heads of household continues to be of concern. Little to no research has been undertaken to examine attitudes toward divorce for the African American graduate student population. Although one cannot assume that an individual's attitude toward participation in a behavior will be consistent with their decision to engage in that behavior, understanding a population's attitudes often provides insight into understanding their behaviors. The results of this research study identified two major findings. The first was that there was no significant statistical difference in attitude toward divorce for persons based upon their family of origin type. The Second major finding was that gender did significantly mediate the relationship between attitude toward divorce and family of origin type.

The first finding showed no statistical difference in attitude toward divorce for persons from married, not married, and never married households. All three groups had attitude scores that were in a similar range. The never married group had an average score of 17.77, the married group had an average score of 17.82, and the not together group had an average score of 18.78. All of the averages were categorized as low which represents more prodivorce attitudes. The similar score between the three groups could be interpreted to mean that one's family of origin has little impact on how one comes to view divorce. This view

runs contrary to the theoretical premise of the study. A second explanation would be that the sample was biased because it was based upon a small, unrepresentative, nonprobability sample. This explanation states that because there was not a larger group of graduate students who more equally represented in family type, age, pursuing degree, and etc., the results cannot be assumed to be accurate. A third explanation is that the uniqueness of Black graduate student sample population produced results that would not be consistent with that produced among the Black population as a whole. This interpretation could be based on the belief that more educated Blacks may tend to intellectualize the divorce experience in their families of origin and thus arrive at a different conclusion about divorce based upon their understanding of their experience.

Finding 1 is not consistent with the findings of most investigators, but no known studies have investigated attitudes toward divorce in the Black graduate student population. Amongst the general population, adults from nonintact families of origin have generally been found to hold more positive attitudes toward divorce than those from intact households. A small number of studies have found that there was no significant relationship between attitude toward divorce and family of origin type, and others have found the relationship to be significant, but only for one gender.

The second major finding revealed that gender significantly mediated the relationship between attitude toward divorce and family of origin type. For the sake of this analysis the never married category was excluded. The results showed that 92.3% of men from married families of origin held a positive attitude toward divorce. This can be compared with 60% of the women from married families of origin who held a positive attitude toward divorce. When comparing men from not together families of origin with women from not together families of origin, 60%

held a positive attitude toward divorce, whereas only 33.3% of the women held a positive attitude toward divorce. Thus the results show that women from not together households clearly have the most antidivorce attitude while men from married households clearly have the most prodivorce attitude.

An explanation for why men from married families of origin held the most positive attitudes toward divorce is that the majority of persons in this category may have witnessed an unhappy parental marriage. This parental unhappiness may have affected how the respondents came to view divorce. Although these respondents may not have experienced divorce themselves, they may have come to believe divorce to be a better alternative to an unhappy marriage like the one their parents may have had. Here it would be interesting to compare the happiness of the parental relationship with the attitude toward divorce for those men from married families. This explanation would be consistent with previous research literature that has found persons from families of origin where the parents were unhappy, to hold similar views on divorce as those from divorced families.

An interpretation of how men from not together households come to hold a more prodivorce than antidivorce sentiment is that these men tended to intellectualize the divorce experience in a way that allowed them to conclude that divorce is okay or sometimes unavoidable. If these men had a negative experience with divorce in their family they may have been able to put their old emotions aside and eventually come to view divorce more positively.

An understanding of why women from not together households held the most antidivorce sentiment, is best explained in terms of the stronger impact the divorce may have on young women as opposed to young men. As explained in the theoretical framework section of this research, women may attach more psychological meaning to divorce and thus come to perceive it differently than

men. In terms of this research, it could be that these women who witnessed their parents' divorce, were so deeply affected by the experience that they came to hold very strongly anti-divorce attitudes rather than adopting a prodivorce viewpoint that understands divorce to be either acceptable or sometimes unavoidable.

Women from married households also held a more strongly prodivorce than antidiyorce sentiment but these feelings were not near as unanimous as they were for the men. This may be understood in part by using the reasoning of the explanation given for the men. Women from married households may have witnessed an unhappy marriage that altered their views on divorce in the direction of being more positive. However, as explicated in the theoretical framework section of this research, a larger percentage of women's attitudes on divorce may have been swayed by attaching a stronger emotional meaning to the divorce in their family of origin, thus offsetting the homogeneity of the effect, and causing their attitude toward divorce scores to be less unanimously prodivorce than the males.

Although most studies have included gender as a control variable, most have not found gender to have mediating effects on the relationship between attitude and family of origin type. Thus this finding is inconsistent with the findings of the majority of research that exists on family of origin's relationship to attitudes toward divorce. It is important to remember that first of all there is only a small body of research using these two variables, therefore even the small number of studies that have found gender to significantly mediate the relationship between family of origin and attitude toward divorce is significant. The second point that is important to keep in mind is that there are no known studies that have used the Black or Black graduate student population to investigate these variables. African Americans have proven to show patterns significantly different than those of the

general population in other divorce related studies, and therefore caution should be used in comparing the consistency of these results with those of existing studies.

Both findings 1 and 2 have implications for future research and for social work practice. First of all both findings suggest that there is a need for more research on attitudes toward divorce for African Americans. Although the first hypothesis was rejected and the second was accepted both results were inconsistent with previous studies undertaken using mostly European Americans, thus suggesting that attitudes toward divorce for African Americans may be quite distinct.

In finding 1, family of origin type was not found to be significantly related to attitude toward divorce. This particular finding may suggest that tapping the attitudes of African Americans provides little insight into understanding the rate of divorce for African Americans from divorced families of origin. If family of origin has as little influence on one's attitude toward divorce as has been shown in this study, then there is no reason to continue to do research on this particular relationship, because it could not help explain the divorce rate. Thus it may be necessary to investigate other independent variables to explain attitudes toward divorce. If a variable other than family of origin type is used, there may be more disparity on attitude toward divorce. On the contrary, in finding 2 gender was found to significantly mediate the effect of family of origin on attitude toward divorce. Significance was found in the relationship between family of origin and attitude toward divorce for the men but not for the women. Although the relationship between family of origin and attitude toward divorce was significant for men, the significance came from an unexpected direction. The study found almost 100% of the men from married families of origin to be prodivorce rather than antidivorce. Although some studies have found gender to significantly

mediate the relationship between the two variables, the direction of the significance is inconsistent with previous research. This information suggests that tapping attitudes solely for African American men from intact and nonintact families of origin could be of great benefit in gaining insight into the relationship between attitude toward divorce and the divorce rate for African Americans.

One other important implication from finding one is that attitude toward divorce might have little relationship to behavior for the African American population. In other words, for African Americans, attitude toward divorce may not be a good predictor of one's future decision to annul their marriage or to keep it intact. It could be that future research should investigate a dependent variable other than attitude toward divorce to help explain the divorce rate in the African American community. Factors outside of the attitude toward divorce that one acquires through the witnessing of a divorced or unhappy parental marriage may play a much more significant role in contributing to high divorce rates in the African American community. Finding two, however, implies that for men, attitude toward divorce could have a strong relationship to later decisions to divorce and that attitude toward divorce is a variable that should continue to be investigated to help explain the divorce rate among the Black male population.

In terms of implications for social work practice, the first finding suggests that because family of origin has little impact in determining attitude toward divorce more group work needs to be done with children from all families of origin to determine what types of variables are effecting their attitudes, and to help them sort through these issues. The second finding might suggest that when a practitioner is working with Black men from intact families of origin, they should not be surprised to routinely uncover positive attitudes on divorce, or to find the client needs to address issues related to successful marital attitudes. Both of the

previous suggestions imply that attitude toward divorce has a positive relationship on one's likelihood for a future divorce. Because we don't really know what effects one's attitude toward divorce and we are still assuming that there is a relationship between attitude toward divorce and one's likelihood to divorce, it could be implied that more group and community social work practice needs to be done in this area. For example, if it is suspected that living in a high divorce rate area leads to more prodivorce sentiments among young people in those areas, then relationship workshops to help children and adolescents in high divorce areas come to terms with their reality might be suggested. Through these type of activities young persons could come to understand that couples with happy long lasting marriages do exist and that to believe that one can attain such a relationship is not unrealistic.

The last statement on the research implications for finding two is that more in-depth investigations on Black men using family of origin type and attitude toward divorce as variables need to be completed to substantiate these results. In this research, not only did men from married and not together households of origin have significantly different views on divorce than the women, but the men from not together households almost unanimously held a more prodivorce attitude. This suggests that more research needs to be done to determine how not only parental divorce, but also how the parental marriage effects Black male attitudes on divorce.

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